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AUTHOR Burke, Ronald J.; Weir, Tamara
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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the process which goes on between husbands and wives in helping one another deal with problems and tensions. The husband-wife helping process is envisioned as a moderator of the relationship between the experiencing of pressures and strains in life and work situations and reports of personal satisfaction and well-being. Questionnaires were sent to 189 married husband-wife pairs. Some of the findings indicated that wives generally set the stage for the discussion, alleviation and resolution of anxieties and tensions arising for either partner. Couples who were older and married longer revealed a diminished level of mutual helping activity, a decrease in communication about problems and tensions, and greater criticism of each other's functioning as a helper. The introduction of children into the family appeared to offer diminishing returns to the husband-wife helping relationship emerged as a very significant factor influencing the quality of life of the marital partners. Suggestions for further research are presented. (Author/PC)

Husband-Wife Helping Relationships: The "Mental Hygiene" Function in Marriage [1]

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Ronald J. Burke and Tamara Weir
York University

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Ten years have passed since Carl Rogers wrote his classic paper on the helping relationship (Rogers, 1961). In that paper, Rogers outlined several characteristics of effective helping relationships which, as numerous studies have shown (Rogers, Gendlin, Kiesler and Truax, 1967; Aspy, 1969; Kratchovil, Carkhuff and Berenson, 1969), are applicable to various spheres of human interaction, both formal and informal (e.g., therapist-client; teacher-student; parent-child). One significant informal setting in which helping takes place is in the day-to-day relationship between marriage partners. Unfortunately, very little is known about the ways in which husbands and wives attempt to help each other deal with tensions and problems. And little is known about the value of this activity to the individuals involved.

One investigation which examined this area in depth was a study by Blood and Wolfe (1960) who conducted interviews with 909 families, exploring the dynamics of married living. They devoted one chapter to the question of how marriage contributes to the mental health or emotional well-being of the participants, particularly the wives. Blood and Wolfe found that few of the women in their sample mentioned interaction

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with their husbands as useful for emotional support or resolving emotional problems. Thus, in general, husbands were not experienced as very salient resources. The wives who did seek their husbands' help were most often characterized by higher social status, and tended to have more egalitarian relationships with their spouses. There was also an indication that life cycle variables may be important in that there appeared to be a decline in seeing the husband as helpful with the passage of time and the interference of children.

There are a number of studies on marital relationships which have explored factors relating to marital happiness and satisfaction (Gurin, et. al, 1960; Luckey, 1964; Navran, 1967, Chillman and Meyer, 1966; Levinger and Senn, 1967; and Levinger, 1963). An overview of their findings reveals that people with happy marriages stress the relationship aspects of marriage rather than situational aspects (e.g., children, home, social life) as sources of their happiness. Persons more satisfied with their marriages also tended to have more positive perceptions of their spouses and saw them as being helpful, considerate, friendly and warm individuals. Furthermore, effective communication was found to be strongly associated with good marital adjustment. That is, couples expressing greater marital satisfaction were more disclosing of their feelings to one another, showed more sensitivity to one another's feelings, talked more to one another, conveyed an understanding of one another's communications and communicated on a wider range of subjects than those dissatisfied with their marriages. An interesting and significant finding emerged from the research carried out by Dean

(1966, 1968) which showed that marital happiness correlates positively with emotional stability. Yet another study (Ridley, 1973) demonstrated a significant positive association between higher job satisfaction and better marital adjustment for males and for pairs. However, neither of these latter studies clearly established the direction of causality.

The present study attempts to focus on a neglected aspect of marital relationships. It looks at the process which goes on between husbands and wives in helping one another deal with problems and tensions. Figure 1 outlines the framework underlying the present research. It presents three panels of variables: the middle panel of the figure indicates aspects of the husband-wife helping process examined in this study; the left panel outlines potential antecedents or correlates of this process; and the right panel, the potential consequences or by-products of husband-wife helping. The husband-wife helping process is envisioned as a moderator of the relationship between the experiencing of pressures and strains in life and work situations and reports of personal satisfaction and well-being.

Enter Figure 1 here

Method

Subjects

The respondents in this study were 189 married husband-wife pairs. The husbands were employed full-time and were members of one of three professional associations: professional engineers (N=54), industrial accountants (N=74) or chartered accountants (N=61). Three-hundred male members were randomly selected from the membership roster of each of these associations and asked to participate in the research. Approximately 28% of the wives were employed full or part-time (N=54) and about half of the couples had children (N=89).

Procedure

Two questionnaires, both approximately twenty pages long, were sent to each male subject at his home address. A cover letter explained the general purpose of the research and how the names were obtained. It also indicated that one of the questionnaires, sealed in its own envelope, was to be completed independently by the wife.

The process of giving and receiving help was investigated by nine questionnaire items, identical for husbands and wives. The majority of the items were measured on a five-or six-point Likert-type scale. They inquired into such specifics as: (1) whom did respondents generally go to for help with problems and tensions; (2) what specific activities did they carry out to help their spouse deal with problems; (3) how satisfied were they with their spouses' help; (4) how satisfied were they with their spouse as a confidante; (5) how desirous were they of having more people closer to rely on for help in times of stress;

(6) how likely were they to let their spouse know when they were tense and the source of their tension; (7) what specific activities did they see their spouses doing to be helpful; (8) how helpful did they feel they were to their spouses in times of stress; and (9) if dissatisfied with spouses' help, what specific activities would they like to see their spouse do, or do differently.

Other variables regarded as possible correlates of husband-wife helping were also included as part of the questionnaire. There were a number of standard demographic items such as age, education, income, length of time married, number of children and wife's status (working or non-working). Several specific scales developed previously by other researchers were used as well. Thus, job pressures were measured using a 14-item scale of Kahn et. al, (1964) and Indik, Seashore and Slesinger (1964); and communication between husband and wife (i.e. perceived importance of communicating in seventeen different areas and actual communication in these areas) was measured by a 17-item scale used previously by Levinger (1964) and Levinger and Senn (1967).

The variables representing consequences were also measured by using established scales. Thus, mental and physical well-being was assessed by a 19-item scale used earlier by Gurin, Veroff, and Feld (1960), and marital satisfaction was assessed by a 15-item scale developed by Locke and Wallace (1959). Likert-type scales measuring life satisfaction (4 items) and job satisfaction (12 items) were created for this particular study. The former asked the respondents to indicate their satisfaction with aspects of their life such as home, family and leisure activities; the

latter, with a standard list of job facets such as supervision, challenge, pay, and use of present skills.

Results

Table 1 presents the means and standard deviations for the husbands and wives on each of the nine helping relationship variables. Four significant differences in means were found: (1) Wives were more likely to tell their husbands when they were feeling tense and what they were feeling tense about, than were husbands to tell their wives. (2.7 vs. 2.2, $p < .05$).

(2) Wives were more likely to go to their husbands first for help in dealing with their tension, than were husbands to go to their wives. (1.3 vs. 3.2, $p < .05$).

(3) Wives listed more specific activities which were designed to be helpful to their spouses than did the husbands. (2.5 vs. 2.2, $p < .05$).

(4) Wives perceived themselves as being of more help to their husbands than did husbands in regard to their wives. (2.4 vs. 2.1, $p < .05$).

Enter Table 1 Here

Relationship Between Husbands' and Wives' Responses on Specific Variables.

The right-hand column of Table 1 presents the correlations between husbands and wives on each of the nine helping variables. Six of these correlations are positive and significantly different from zero at the .05 level of confidence. Thus, there is a positive and significant relationship between the following:

(1) the degree of satisfaction expressed by the husbands with their wives' helping and the degree of satisfaction expressed by their wives ($r = .29$),

(2) the degree of satisfaction expressed by the husbands with their wives as confidantes and the degree of satisfaction expressed by their wives ($r = .29$),

(3) the number of specific activities husbands indicated they carried out to be helpful to their wives and the number their wives indicated they carried out to help their husbands ($r = .16$).

(4) the number of specific activities which husbands listed in describing how their wives helped them and the number their wives listed describing how their husbands helped them ($r = .15$),

(5) the likelihood that husbands would tell their wives when and why they were feeling tense and the likelihood their wives would do the same ($r = .18$), and

(6) the degree to which husbands expressed a need for more people closer to them to rely on for help and the degree to which their wives expressed a similar need ($r = .16$),

Relationships Among Helping Process Variables.

In Table 2 the correlations among the nine helping process variables for husband-wife pairs are presented. Satisfaction with spouse's help, a subjective report of spouse's helping effectiveness, was selected as an important criterion variable in this analysis. Greater pair satisfaction with one another's helping activities was related to :

(1) a greater satisfaction with one another as confidantes ($r = .62$),

(2) a greater likelihood they would tell one another when and why they were tense ($r = .33$),

(3) engaging in a greater number of activities designed to be helpful to one another ($r = .30$),

(4) listing a greater number of activities which they perceived their spouses carrying out to be helpful to them ($r = .16$),

(5) a greater felt helpfulness to one another ($r = .49$),

(6) a greater likelihood they would turn to one another, first, for help with their problems ($r = .20$),

(7) a lower likelihood they would express a need for other people to rely on for help in times of stress ($r = -.24$),

(8) the lower likelihood they would indicate they wanted their spouses to increase or change their helping behaviours ($r = -.40$),

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Enter Table 2 about here

Correlates of Husband-Wife Helping Relationship Variables

A number of potential correlates of husband-wife helping were also related to the nine helping relationship variables. These included such factors as age, income, education, intensity of job and life pressures, length of time married, wife's status (working or non-working), and number of children. Husband and wife data analyzed individually (Table 3) and in pairs (Table 4) provided the following significant relationships:

Enter Table 3 and 4 about here

Age and Length of time married

(1) Older husbands and wives were less likely to tell their spouses when and why they were tense (r= -.21 and -.17, respectively). They also showed greater indications of wanting their spouses to increase and/or change their ways of being helpful (r = .38 and .30). In addition, older wives indicated that their husbands engaged in fewer helping activities (r = -.19) and they were less likely to select their husbands as first choice of helper (r = .22).

(2) Length of time married, which was significantly related to age (r = .89), related to the same helping relationship variables as did age for husbands and wives.

(3) Older husband and wife pairs reported less helping activity occurring between them (r = -.21). They were significantly less likely to inform their spouses when and why they were feeling tense (r = -.27) and they more frequently indicated that they wanted their spouses to increase or change their helping behaviours (r = .31).

However, the greater the differences in the husbands' and wives' ages, the more activities they undertook to be helpful to one another ($r = .20$), the more satisfied they were with one another's help ($r = .18$), and the more likely they would select their mates as the first person they would go to for help ($r = -.18$).

Children

Number of children was found to be significantly related to pair performance on a number of the helping relationship variables.

The greater the number of children

(1) the fewer helping activities spouses report undertaking to help one another ($r = -.25$)

(2) the fewer helping activities pairs report that their spouses undertake to assist them ($r = -.15$)

(3) the greater the likelihood of selecting one another as first choice of helper ($r = -.21$)

Income

Although husbands' incomes were unrelated to the helping relationship variables on individual analysis of the data, there were a number of significant findings on pair analysis. Thus, the larger the husband's income, the lower the helping activity in the marriage ($r = -.20$). However, pairs having greater income also tended to perceive themselves as more helpful to one another ($r = .18$).

Job Pressures

Husbands experiencing greater job pressures were more likely to inform their wives when they were feeling tense and why ($r = .16$), but were less likely to be satisfied with their wives' helping

efforts (r = -.16), and were more likely to express a desire for more people, closer, to rely on for help (r = .23).

The intensity of wives' job pressures was significantly related to their feeling less helpful to their husbands' (r = -.42) but perceiving their husbands as doing more to help them (r = .40).

Life Pressures

The greater the life pressures reported by the husbands the less satisfied they appeared to be with their wives helping efforts (r = -.35); however, they in turn perceived themselves as being less helpful resources to their wives (r = -.20).

Wives reporting greater life pressures saw themselves as being less helpful to their spouses (r = -.52); however, they indicated that their husbands were, in fact, more active helpers to them (r = .49).

Working Wives

Wives who were employed listed a greater number of activities which they would like their husbands to do or do differently to help them (r = .44).

Husbands whose wives worked were less likely to reveal to their wives when and why they were feeling tense (r = -.32) and were less satisfied with their wives as confidantes (r = -.33).

Life Pressures

The greater the life pressures reported by the husband-wife pairs, the lower the pair satisfaction with their helping relationship (r = -.22); the lower the indications that they wanted an increase or changes in their spouses' helping (r = -.25), the lower their felt helpfulness to their spouses (r = -.23); the lower the likelihood of going to their respect-

ive spouses first for help (r = .22).

Communication

The extent to which husband and wife pairs felt it was important to communicate with each other in the seventeen different areas, and said they actually communicated in these areas was significantly related to a number of helping relationship variables. These included:

(1) satisfaction with their spouses' help (r = .40 and r = .29);

(2) telling spouses when anxious and why (r = .53 and r = .44);

(3) felt helpfulness to spouses (r = .26 and r = .32);

(4) satisfaction with their spouses as confidantes (r = .56 and r = .53);

(5) wanting their spouses to change and/or increase their helping activity (r = -.59 and r = -.47). The two communication indices were significantly related (r = .73).

Husband-wife differences in actual communication in the seventeen areas was also related to five of the twelve helping relationship variables. The data indicated that the larger the husband-wife differences in actual communication

(1) the lower their satisfaction with their spouses' help (r = -.27),

(2) the less likely they would tell one another when they were tense and why (r = -.32),

(3) the lower their felt helpfulness to one another (r = -.23),

(4) the more likely they were to indicate they wanted their spouses to change or increase their helping activities (r = .40).

Consequences of Effective Husband-Wife Helping Relationships

The helping relationship variables were related to a number of outcome measures. These were: job satisfaction, marital satisfaction, life satisfaction, and mental and physical well-being. Some of the more interesting and statistically significant findings from the husband and wife data, analyzed individually (Table 5) and in pairs (Table 6), are summarized here.

Job Satisfaction

Husbands and working wives who reported higher levels of job satisfaction tended to express greater satisfaction with their spouses' helping activities ($r = .17$ and $r = .32$) and with their spouses as confidantes ($r = .14$ and $r = .22$).

Enter Tables 5 and 6 about here

Satisfaction with Life

Husbands and wives who reported higher levels of life satisfaction:

(1) were more satisfied with their spouses' help ($r = .33$ and $r = .30$),

(2) were less likely to indicate they wanted their spouses to increase or change their helping activities ($r = -.46$ and $r = -.26$),

(3) felt they were more helpful to their spouses ($r = .29$ and $r = .29$),

(4) were more satisfied with their spouses as confidantes ($r = .26$ and $r = .26$).

Pair satisfaction with life was significantly related to six of the helping relationship variables. The more favorable the pair satisfaction with life, the more favorable the pair standing on the following helping dimensions:

(1) pair satisfaction with their helping relationship ($r = .38$),

(2) perceived helpfulness of each member towards their spouse ($r = .34$),

(3) the desire for more people to rely on for help with problems and tensions ($r = -.31$),

(4) pair satisfaction with one another as confidantes ($r = .33$).

Marital Satisfaction

Pairs reporting greater marital satisfaction also reported

(1) performing a greater number of helping activities for one another ($r = .17$),

(2) a greater likelihood of letting one another know when they were tense and why ($r = .20$),

(3) a lesser desire for the spouse to change or increase their helping behaviours ($r = -.51$),

(4) perceiving themselves as more helpful to one another ($r = .44$),

(5) a greater likelihood of selecting one another as first choice of helper ($r = -.23$),

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(6) a lesser desire to have more people, closer, to rely on for help ($r = -.18$),

(7) a greater satisfaction with one another as confidantes ($r = .52$) and

(8) a greater satisfaction with their helping relationship ($r = .62$).

Mental and Physical Well-being

Husbands and wives showing more positive scores on the mental and physical health index indicated greater satisfaction with spouses as confidantes ($r = .16$ and $r = .14$) but also indicated more ways in which they would like to see their spouses increase or change their helping behaviours, ($r = .20$ and $r = .22$).

The pair measure of mental and physical well being was related to five of the helping relationship variables. More positive mental and physical well being was associated with

(1) greater pair satisfaction with their helping relationship ($r = .25$),

(2) greater felt helpfulness to their respective spouses ($r = .17$),

(3) a greater likelihood of selecting one's spouse as first choice of helper ($r = -.19$) and

(4) a greater number of helping activities listed by the pairs that they would like to see their spouses add to or change in their helping interactions ($r = .27$).

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Looking more specifically at the variable, satisfaction with spouse's help, it is evident that the greater the reported pair satisfaction the greater the indications of marital satisfaction and life satisfaction, and the more positive the indications of mental and physical well-being. Additionally, for the husbands in our sample greater satisfaction with spouse's help was associated with greater job satisfaction.

Moderating Effects of Husband-Wife Helping Effectiveness

So far, we have examined the relationship between hypothesized antecedents or correlates of the husband-wife helping relationship and some potentially crucial by-products or outcomes of this process. What about the direct relationship between the antecedents and the outcomes? The data showed that many of the antecedents were indeed significantly related to certain of the outcomes. For example, increasing job pressures reported by the husbands was associated with less job satisfaction ($r = -.27$, $p < .001$) and poorer mental and physical well-being ($r = -.31$, $p < .001$).

One way of examining the effects of husband-wife helping effectiveness on the relationships between the antecedents and the outcomes is to consider the former as a moderator of the relationship between the latter. Thus, obtained relationships between antecedents and outcomes are predicted to be influenced by the level of husband-wife helping effectiveness. To explore this line of reasoning, the total sample of 189 pairs was split into two sub-groups. Pair satisfaction with their helping relationship was the item chosen as the criteria of pair effectiveness. Values on this measure could range from 2 (a low degree of pair

satisfaction) to 12 (a high degree of pair satisfaction). Actual obtained scores varied from 3 to 12. Group 1 (Low Pair Satisfaction) comprised 95 pairs, and Group 2 (High Pair Satisfaction) comprised 83 pairs. The Low Satisfaction group included values from 3 to 10; the High Satisfaction group included values from 11 to 12. The means between the two groups (8.9 vs 11.4 respectively) were significantly different at the .001 level of confidence.

Enter Table 7 about here

It was expected that the relationship between the experiencing of pressures in one's environment (at work and at home) and the translation of these pressures into dissatisfaction or psychosomatic symptoms would be stronger among those pairs with an ineffective helping process, and weaker among those pairs with a more effective helping process. Table 7 presents the correlations between measures of job and life pressures and outcome measures such as satisfaction and well-being. In summary, 5 of the 6 life pressure relationships with satisfaction and well-being measures are greater for low helping effectiveness pairs than for high helping effectiveness pairs. Thus, the experience of life pressures is more strongly associated with dissatisfaction and psychosomatic symptoms for couples low in the ability to be helpful to each other.

For husbands from less effective helping pairs, strength of job pressures was more strongly related to marital dissatisfaction and prevalence of mental and physical symptomatology than for those from more effective helping pairs. Likewise, wives from less effective helping pairs were more likely to exhibit a stronger

relationship between intensity of job pressures and poorer well being.

This pattern of relationships (i.e., a higher correlation between the experiencing of pressures and their translation into dissatisfaction) was not found for either males or females between job pressures and job satisfaction, and life satisfaction.

Taken together these data offer some preliminary support for the notion that pair helping effectiveness moderates the relationship between experienced pressures and strains, and reported satisfaction and well-being. This was particularly true for outcomes such as satisfaction with life, and mental and physical well-being.

Discussion

An examination of the findings yielded a number of important observations on the husband-wife helping interaction, on the relationship between marital helping and specified correlates and consequences, and on the moderating effects of the helping process itself.

Husband-wife helping

A number of significant sex differences emerged from the comparison of husband and wife data on the nine helping relationship variables. The indications were that wives were generally more active in initiating the helping process in their marital relationships. Firstly, they appeared more willing to disclose and discuss their problems with their spouses, than were the husbands with their wives. Secondly, wives were more likely to

select and turn to their husbands as helper of choice than were husbands to select their wives. The latter finding supports the evidence of an earlier paper (Burke and Weir 1974), which found that over 90% of the married women (whether working or not) as compared with 40% of the men indicated the spouse as the person they would go to first for help with problems.

Furthermore, it is interesting to note that not only did the wives appear to be more active in helpee roles but were so in helper roles as well. They appeared to have a greater awareness of concrete helping behaviours which they could employ to help their husbands deal with their tension, and were more active in the performance of these. An interested reader might examine Burke (1971), Hall (1972) or Mann (unpublished manuscript) for specific examples of such activities. In addition, according to their self reports, wives tended to perceive themselves as more helpful resources to their husbands than husbands did to their wives.

These findings suggest that wives generally set the stage for the discussion, the alleviation and the resolution of anxieties and tensions arising for either partner of the marital pair. Perhaps the different socialization of the sexes in our culture which allows women a freer rein with their emotionality and is more accepting of their dependence, makes it easier for the wives to admit when they are under stress and to seek help as required. Data from Rosenthal and his colleagues (1974) offers convincing evidence that females are better able to

respond to non-verbal communication cues than are males. Perhaps it is this sensitivity which permits wives to more easily recognize the emotional state of their spouses and to respond more readily as helpers to their spouses than husbands can to their wives.

Exploring the data further it appears that marital couples can be described as having a pair identity on certain of the helping relationship dimensions. That is, when a higher or lower level response was given by one member of the pair, the other was likely to respond in a similar way. Thus, there was a significant degree of compatibility between husbands and wives responses to such issues as satisfaction with spouses' helping, satisfaction with spouse as a confidante, the level of helping activity occurring in the marriage, the degree of willingness to share problems and anxieties with the spouse; and the need for others outside the marital unit to rely on for help. It is not clear whether this husband-wife similarity appears because of some pre-marital mate selection process or because of a marital interactional process which leads to husbands and wives growing more alike.

It is evident, however, that marital pairs differ from one another in the extent to which they express satisfaction with the helping process in their marriage. Those pairs who are more satisfied with their mutual helping are characterized by a number of behavioral and attitudinal features. The six significant relationships found (see Table 2) suggest that greater self disclosure,

trust, mutual reliance, awareness and performance of concrete helping activities, and greater confidence in the ability to be helpful to one's spouse are important features associated with higher satisfaction with the marital helping transaction.

Correlates of Marital Helping

A number of the factors conceptualized as correlates were shown to be significantly related to the quality of the helping interactions found in marriage. The couples who were older and married longer revealed a diminished level of helping activity occurring between them, a decrease in communication about problems and tensions, and a greater criticalness of each other's functioning as a helper. Older wives in particular, indicated that their first preference would be to go to someone other than their husband with their difficulties. With the passing of time, it appears husbands and wives move in the direction of withdrawing their interest, their motivation and their efforts to be helpful to one another. There is room for conjecture as to why older couples seem much more alienated from and unresponsive to one another's helping needs. Perhaps the older individuals in the sample belong to a generation that placed an emphasis on the material or situational aspects of marriage as opposed to relational concerns. Or, it may be that as individuals progress through the stages of their life cycle, they inevitably confront numerous situations which demand heavy expenditures of their time, energy and commitment. In the face of these events, the relationship aspects of marriage may be easily relegated to a position of low priority and show a gradual deterioration over time.

The introduction of children into the family unit appeared to offer diminishing returns to the husband-wife helping relationship. Although spouses with children seemed to be more reliant on one another, they, in fact, reported receiving less help from their spouses and gave less in return. It is not difficult to imagine that children would be a competing force for the energies and attention of the parents, so that whatever stresses accrue to them remain unnoticed or unattended.

The working wife phenomena seemed to present some potential problems for the marital helping relationship as well. Husbands of working wives indicated that they were less likely to reveal their problems and tensions to their wives and tended to be less satisfied with their wives as confidantes. Working wives, on the other hand, indicated that they wanted their husbands to be more active in helping them deal with their problems. With the wife taking on the increased responsibilities of a job, her own needs for help appear to be greater and at the same time, her availability to her husband may be decreased. Apparently then, the wife's work status can cause ripples of discontent within the pair with regard to their helping interaction.

In looking at the data in the area of job pressures, an interesting family dynamic emerged. The greater the husbands job pressures, the more likely they were to disclose their problems and tensions to their wives; but, the less satisfied they appeared to be with their wive's help and the greater their expressed need to have other close relationships to rely on for help. The

greater the wive's job pressures, the more likely they were to describe their husbands as more active helpers. However, they tended to perceive themselves as not being very helpful to their husbands.

Irrespective of whether it was the husband or wife who was experiencing the severe pressures, it was the wife's helping role which was called into question. A number of possible explanations suggest themselves. In the first instance, it may be that wives find it difficult to relate to the pressures their husbands experience at work. They may feel less confident in their ability to be helpful in these areas and hesitate to interact with their husbands around such issues. In the second instance, wives who are involved in demanding and frustrating jobs in addition to filling the traditional housewife role may very well find their resources depleted and be virtually unable to respond to their husbands' helping needs. In either case, the wife's usefulness as a helper appears diminished.

In contrast with the above, severe life pressures tended to make both husbands and wives feel less effectual as helpers to their spouses. Thus, the greater the life pressures for the pairs the less satisfied they were with one another's helping, the less helpful they perceived themselves being to one another, the less likely they were to depend on one another for help, and the more likely they were to express a need for closer relationships with others who could act as helpers. The findings lead one to believe that serious problems arising for the couple in areas of

mutual concern can have a debilitating effect on both individuals, and reduce their motivation to support or encourage one another through the adversities.

Inherent in the concept of marital helping is the belief that to be helpful to one's spouse, one must first understand him (her). One significant way of reaching this understanding is through verbal communication. It was not surprising therefore, to discover that the communication measures, employed here, were found to be related to the helping relationships items in a positive direction. Thus, couples who shared a higher agreement on the importance of communicating about a variety of specific issues, and indicated they actually talked about these with their spouses, were more likely to disclose their problems and anxieties to one another, to feel more satisfied with one another as confidantes, to view themselves as being more helpful to one another and to express greater satisfaction with one another's helping endeavours. The wider the gap between them in terms of their willingness to broach specific issues with the spouse, the more likely they were to show the reverse of the above. It appears then that couples who have established good channels of communication around broad areas relevant to their life together can better meet the challenge of helping one another under conditions of stress and strain.

Consequences of Marital Helping

A consideration of the findings in the area of outcome measures suggest that the husband-wife helping process is an important

factor contributing to the marital, job and life satisfaction of the pair and their mental and physical well-being as well. There were a number of features of this process which distinguished the pairs who expressed greater satisfaction with their marriage. These couples appeared to be better confidantes to one another; they were more open and communicative about their problems and concerns; they appeared to be more cognisant of their partners' helping needs and exerted themselves more actively to meet them; they were less critical and more satisfied with the quality and quantity of the help they received, and in turn appeared more confident in their own helpfulness to one another. The mutuality established by these pairs seemed to mitigate the need for people outside the marriage to serve as helpers.

Those pairs who expressed a greater satisfaction with life in general shared many of the same features. They too appeared to have attained a more satisfactory helping relationship with one another. In addition, they seemed to have a higher level of trust in one another as confidantes, a greater estimation of their helpfulness to one another and a lesser need for individuals outside the marital unit to depend on for help.

The couples who, according to our measures were in better mental and physical health showed the following characteristics. They tended to select one another as first choice of helper under situations of stress; they viewed themselves as being good helpers to their spouses and they expressed greater satisfaction with the helping interaction established between them.

Although pair values on the relationship between job satisfaction and the helping variables were not obtained, the findings

from husbands and wives individually, revealed certain similarities. Both males and females who reported greater satisfaction with their job situations described their spouses as more satisfactory helpers and more satisfactory confidantes.

The overall findings were distilled to focus attention on the variable-satisfaction with spouse's help-our proxy measure of marital helping effectiveness. This particular factor was found to be significantly and positively associated with all the outcome measures of satisfaction (i.e. job, marital and life) and with the emotional and physical well being measure as well. The following rationale is offered as a possible explanation for the findings.

It is common knowledge that living in a state of heightened and prolonged tensions can negatively affect an individual's perceptions of himself and his world. It can also cause his emotional and behavioral responding to become increasingly dysfunctional in relation to his external environment. The marital helping interaction by giving explicit recognition to the personal distress of one or other spouse sets the process in motion of dealing with stressful events as they arise and interrupts the building up of tensions. It can provide for the comfort, support and validation of the distressed spouse through selected environmental manipulations and/or through personal attention and understanding. It can offer the individual short-term relief by giving him an opportunity to ventilate his feelings in an atmosphere of concern and caring. It can hold out the promise of long-term relief by providing the occasion for him to clarify his perceptions of the problem areas and to consider appropriate behavioral strategies for resolving these. Thus, the marital helping process by helping to minimize and resolve the stress

experiences of husbands and wives can increase the likelihood that their perceptions of their life's experiences will be more positive, and reduce the potential that accumulated tensions will be translated into pathology.

The findings on the moderating effects of marital helping strengthen the above conclusions. Life pressures were more likely to be translated into negative outlooks on jobs, marriage and life, and into poorer health for those pairs whose helping interactions were less satisfactory. Although, under conditions of high job pressures the moderating influence of effective marital helping was not as uniformly evident, it appeared in a number of areas. Husbands, reporting severe pressures but also indicating higher satisfaction with spouse's helping were found to be more satisfied with their marriages and generally, in better health. Wives under similar conditions also revealed a more positive state of mental and physical well-being.

On the basis of the above findings, the husband-wife helping relationship emerges as a significant factor influencing the quality of life of the marital partners. Unfortunately, it is an aspect of marriage that often remains undeveloped or at best, is left to evolve haphazardly. Clearly it deserves greater emphasis and attention. The nature of the conclusions obtained in this study suggest that continued examination along similar lines can yield useful information regarding the characteristics of individuals and processes which contribute to effective helping interactions in marriage. Such information is essential for informing, educating and counselling individuals on the potential, but often unrealized "mental hygiene" function of marriage. For to para-

phrase Blood and Wolfe - where better than in the marriage relationship, based on mutual affection, commitment and accessability, should one find life-time-help-as needed.

Footnotes

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FIGURE 1

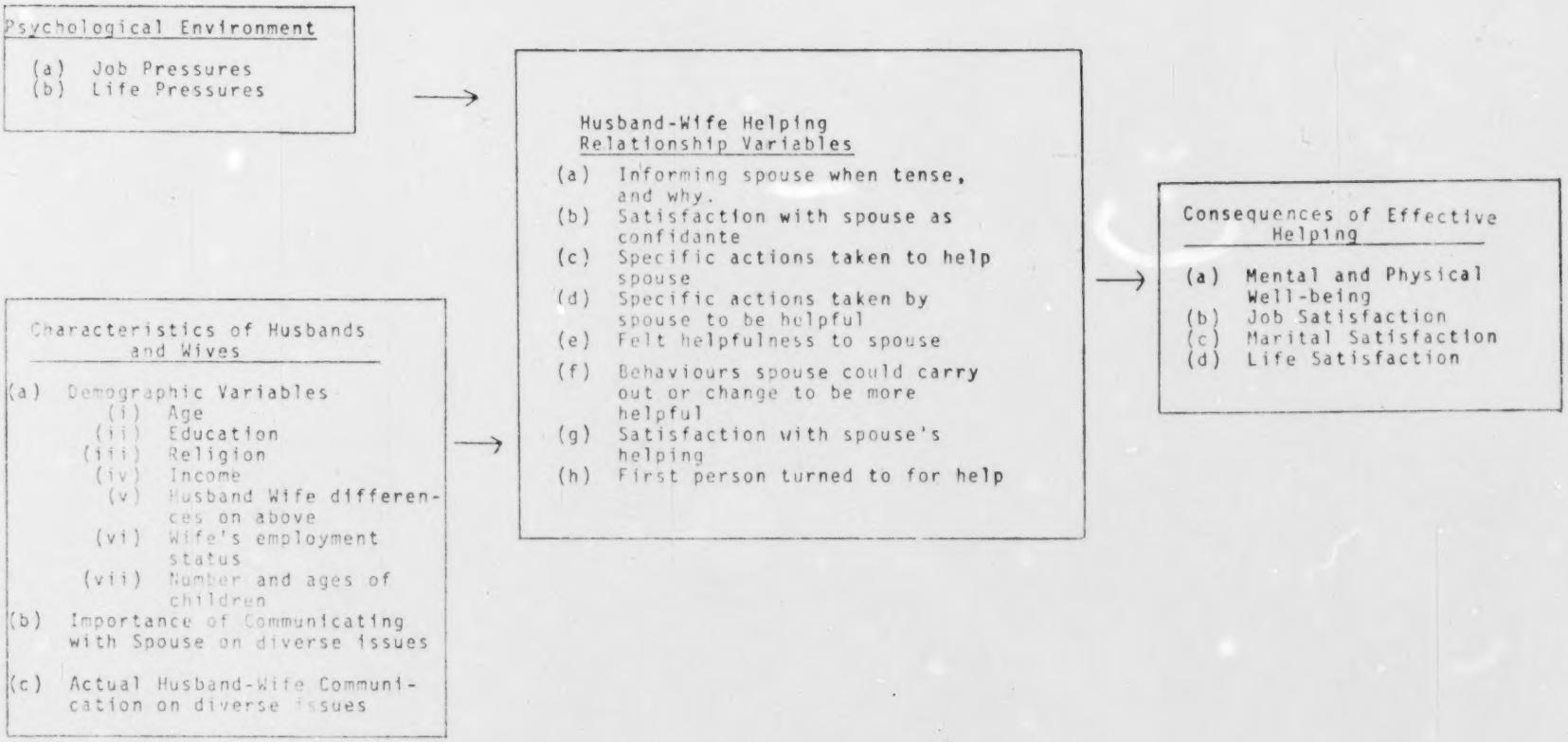
Psychological Environment
(a) Job Pressures
(b) Life Pressures
Characteristics of Husbands and Wives
(a) Demographic Variables
(i) Age
(ii) Education
(iii) Religion
(iv) Income
(v) Husband Wife differences on above
(vi) Wife's employment status
(vii) Number and ages of children
(b) Importance of Communicating with Spouse on diverse issues
(c) Actual Husband-Wife Communication on diverse issues
Husband-Wife Helping Relationship Variables
(a) Informing spouse when tense, and why.
(b) Satisfaction with spouse as confidante
(c) Specific actions taken to help spouse
(d) Specific actions taken by spouse to be helpful
(e) Felt helpfulness to spouse
(f) Behaviours spouse could carry out or change to be more helpful
(g) Satisfaction with spouse's helping
(h) First person turned to for help
Consequences of Effective Helping
(a) Mental and Physical Well-being
(b) Job Satisfaction
(c) Marital Satisfaction
(d) Life Satisfaction

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Table 1

Comparison of Husbands and Wives on

Helping Relationship Variables

		Husbands Mean	Husbands S.D.	Wives Mean	Wives S.D.	Correlations Husband-Wife
(1)	Number of activities spouse does to help	2.0	1.01	2.2	1.16	.15*
(2)	Tell spouse when feeling tense, and why	2.2[a]	1.09	2.7[a]	1.00	.18*
(3)	Satisfaction with spouses help	4.0	1.04	4.0	1.09	.29*
(4)	Number of activities spouse could do, or do differently	1.6	1.01	1.8	1.03	.00
(5)	Number of activities done to help spouse	2.2[a]	.95	2.5[a]	.99	.16*
(6)	Felt helpfulness to spouse	2.1[a]	.83	2.4[a]	.82	.12
(7)	First person gone to for help	3.2[a]	1.99	1.3[a]	1.04	.07
(8)	Desire for more people closer to rely on for help	1.3	.61	1.4	.67	.16*
(9)	Satisfaction with spouse as a confidante	3.5	.70	3.5	.71	.29*

[a]Husband-wife difference is statistically significant at the .05 level of confidence or better.

*Correlation between husband and wife responses are significantly different from zero at the .05 level of confidence or better.

Table 2

Inter-Correlations Between Twelve

Helping Relationship Variables for Husband-Wife Pairs

		(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
(1)	Number of activities spouse does to help	.28**	.30**	-.14*	.55**	.10	-.06	.07	.28**
(2)	Tell spouse when feeling tense and why		.33**	-.23**	.08	.19**	-.27	.00	.39**
(3)	Satisfaction with spouse's help			-.40**	.16*	.49**	.20**	-.24**	.62**
(4)	Number of activities spouse could do, or do differently				.40**	-.26**	.38**	-.12	-.60**
(5)	Number of activities done to help spouse					.22**	.04	-.11	.09
(6)	Felt helpfulness to spouse						-.25**	-.17*	.41**
(7)	First person gone to for help							-.02	-.33**
(8)	Desire for more people closer to rely on for help								-.04
(9)	Satisfaction with spouse as a confidante								

** Correlation is significantly different from 0 at the .01 level of confidence, two-tailed test.
* Correlation is significantly different from 0 at the .05 level of confidence, two-tailed test.

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Table 3

Correlates of Effective Helping Relationships (Individual Level of Analysis)[a]

	Helping Variables	Husband's Age	Wife's Age	Effects of Wife Working on the Husbands	Effects of Wife Working on the Wife	Husband's Job Pressures	Wife's Job Pressures	Wife's Life Pressures	Husband's Life Pressures
(1)	Number of activities spouse does to help		-.19				.40	.49	
(2)	Tell spouse when feeling tense, and why	-.21	-.17	-.32		.16			
(3)	Satisfaction with spouse's help					-.16			-.35
(4)	Number of activities spouse could do, or do differently	.38	.30		.44	-.18			-.18
(5)	Number of activities done to help spouse								
(6)	Felt helpfulness to spouse						-.42	-.52	-.20
(7)	First person gone to for help		.22						
(8)	Desire for more people closer to rely on for help					.23			.19
(9)	Satisfaction with spouse as a confidante			-.33					

[a] Correlations in the table are significantly different from zero at the .05 level of confidence or better.

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Table 4

Correlates of Effective Helping Relationships (Pair level of analysis) [a]

Helping Variables	Pair Age	Difference in ages	Years Pair Married	Husband's Income	Husband & Wife Life Pressures	Number of children	Husband Wife Actual Communication	Husband Wife Differences in Actual Communication	Husband Wife Importance of Communication	Husband Wife Differences in Importance of Communication
(1) Number of activities spouse does to help	-.21	.24	-.24	-.20		-.25			.30	
(2) Tell spouse when feeling tense, and why	-.27		-.26				.44	-.32	.53	-.28
(3) Satisfaction with spouse's help		.18	.18		-.22		.29	-.27	.40	
(4) Number of activities spouse could do, or do differently	.31			.25	-.25		-.47	.40	-.59	.28
(5) Number of activities done to help spouse		.20	-.20			-.15				
(6) Felt Helpfulness to spouse				.18	-.23		.32	-.23	.26	
(7) First person gone to for help		-.18			.22	-.21			-.20	
(8) Desire for more people closer to rely on for help					.16					
(9) Satisfaction with spouse as a confidante							.53		.56	

[a] Correlations in the table are significantly different from zero at the .05 level of confidence.

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Table 5

Consequence of Effective Helping Relationships (Individual level of analysis)[a]

Helping Variables	Husband's Job Satisfaction	Husband's Mental and Physical Well-being	Husband's Satisfaction With Life	Wife's Job Satisfaction	Wife's Satisfaction With Life	Wife's Mental and Physical Well-being
(1) Number of activities spouse does to help		-.15		-.25	-.15	-.16
(2) Tell spouse when feeling tense, and why			.15			
(3) Satisfaction with spouse's help	.17	.28	.33	.32	.30	
(4) Number of activities spouse could do, or do differently		.20	-.46	.47	-.26	.22
(5) Number of activities done to help spouse						
(6) Felt helpfulness to spouse			.29		.29	
(7) First person gone to for help				.31		-.18
(8) Desire for more people closer to rely on for help					-.33	-.28
(9) Satisfaction with spouse as a confidante	.14	.16	.26	.22	.26	.14

[a] Correlations in the table are significantly different from zero at the .05 level of confidence or better.

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Table 6

Consequence of Effective Helping Relationships (Pair level of analysis)[a]

Helping Variables	Pair Mental and Physical Well-being	Pair Marital Satisfaction	Satisfaction With Life
(1) Number of activities spouse does to help		.17	
(2) Tell spouse when feeling tense, and why		.20	
(3) Satisfaction with spouse's help	.25	.62	.38
(4) Number of activities spouse could do, or do differently	.27	-.51	
(5) Number of activities done to help spouse			
(6) Felt helpfulness to spouse	.17	.44	.34
(7) First person gone to for help	-.19	-.23	
(8) Desire for more people closer to rely on for help		-.18	-.31
(9) Satisfaction with spouse as a confidante		.52	.33

[a] Correlations in the table are significantly different from zero at the .05 level of confidence or better.

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Table 7

Moderating Effects of

Husband-Wife Helping Effectiveness

Life Pressures (Pair Measures)	(Group 1) Low Satisfaction With Helping Pairs	(Group 2) High Satisfaction With Helping Pairs
Life Pressures - Husband Satisfaction with Life	-.52 (58)*	-.22 (60)*
Life Pressures - Wife Satisfaction with Life	-.43 (61)*	-.40 (64)*
Life Pressures - Pair Satisfaction with Life	-.57 (72)*	-.37 (71)*
Life Pressures - Husband Mental and Physical Well-being	-.34 (69)*	-.19 (70)
Life Pressures - Wife Mental and Physical Well-being	-.37 (68)*	-.50 (66)*
Life Pressures - Pair Mental and Physical Well-being	-.58 (62)*	-.44 (64)*
Job Pressures (Husband's Data)		
Job Pressures - Job Satisfaction	-.17 (84)	-.29 (76)*
Job Pressures - Satisfaction with Life	-.20 (76)*	-.25 (66)*
Job Pressures - Marital Satisfaction	-.25 (53)*	.00 (55)
Job Pressures - Mental and Physical Well-being	-.41 (87)*	-.11 (77)
Job Pressures (Wife's Data)		
Job Pressures - Job Satisfaction	-.24 (14)	.13 (20)
Job Pressures - Satisfaction with Life	-.47 (14)	-.62 (19)
Job Pressures - Marital Satisfaction	.06 (10)	-.49 (14)*
Job Pressures - Mental and Physical Well-being	-.49 (17)*	.15 (20)

*Correlation is significantly different from zero at the .05 level of confidence or -etter, two-tailed test.